

Transcript of the President's News Conference on Foreign and Domestic Matters

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EXCERPT

2. Intelligence Agencies

Q. Mr. President, are you now considering unifying the direction of all the intelligence agencies under a single individual and, if so, when might that come about?

A. Shortly after I was inaugurated President, I asked the National Security Council to begin a study about the organizational structure of the intelligence agencies. I have no previous position about what that decision might be. This study has been going on now for more than four months and I think a recommendation to me is imminent. There obviously will be differences of opinion. I would hope that these differences could be ironed out among the State Department and national security adviser, the present director of the C.I.A., the director of the intelligence community, Stan Turner, and the Secretary of Defense.

But those matters on which they still disagree when the recommendation comes to me, I'll resolve them without hesitation. I think that there is a need to protect the very important aspect of a diversity of opinions in making assessments of intelligence, the proper collation of data to be presented to me and other consumers.

And I think it's important that we move very strongly away from past procedure and let those who use the intelligence data give a direction to the intelligence community about the relative priorities that are important. In the past the intelligence community itself has set its own priorities; I think in the future the Defense Department, State Department, the President and others ought to set the priorities.

But I don't have any previous position yet about the exact organizational structure.

One other comment is that I have met with the Congressional leaders about this subject. My own hope is that if we can reach reasonable agreement within the executive branch that we can work very closely with the Congress in setting into law the charge to the intelligence community and the organizational structure of the intelligence community. So far this has been done by executive order.

But I think that progress is good. There are bound to be differences of opinion, and strong differences of opinion. If they're not resolved otherwise, I'll resolve them myself.

11. Soviet Dissident

Q. Mr. President, to follow up on your remarks about human rights, Mrs. Anatoly Shcharansky, the wife of a Soviet dissident who's under arrest, is visiting the United States and yesterday she expressed interest in seeing you to ask you to intervene in this case. I'd like to ask, do you think that this sort of thing can be useful and do you plan to see her?

A. I don't have any plans to meet Mrs. Shcharansky. But I have inquired deeply within the State Department and within the C.I.A. as to whether or not Mr. Shcharansky has ever had any known relationship, in a subversive way or otherwise, with the C.I.A. The answer is no. We've double-checked this and I have been hesitant to make that public announcement, but now I'm completely convinced that contrary to the allegations that have been reported in the press that Mr. Shcharansky has never had any sort of relationship, to our knowledge, with the C.I.A.